

Exegetical Notes, Romans 1:18-32

**“Not Ashamed”**

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**Romans 1:18-32**

**Verses 18-20**

***The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,<sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.***

- In the next three chapters, Paul will explain why all people need a Savior.
- Paul says that “God’s wrath IS being revealed.” The verbs are emphatic, present tense verbs. That means that it is without doubt that God’s wrath is being revealed and that God’s wrath is being revealed at this very moment in time! It is not something that will happen at the end of time in a great final act of judgment. It is already occurring. The reality of the revelation of God’s wrath is expressed in verse 24, “he gave them over.” God has lifted his hands of protection and given sinful people the right to pursue the evil intentions of their self-will. He is not fuming in anger. He is letting people explore the results of living without him. The consequence of their choice to live without God brings the judgment that falls on them.
- The people are guilty because God has freely shown himself to them. The first evidence of God’s loving nature is found in creation. God is made plain in what he has created. Creation shows God’s power in that he made it. Creation also displays God’s nature in its manifold

beauty. When people deny that God made the heavens and the earth, they are denying the existence of God entirely and declaring that they do not need a Savior. The consequences of this choice cost them eternal life.

### **Verses 21-25**

***For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup> They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.***

- Though it seems a simple thing, when people deny God as creator things change in their life perspective. First, they stop glorifying God and giving thanks to God. They stop worshiping God. When worship stops, they start thinking differently about life and become insensitive to God's word; "their hearts are darkened." Second, they begin to "think more highly of themselves than they ought. They think they are smarter than everyone else, but in truth they have become fools. Third, they worship things other than God. Paul specifically mentions the worship of images that these people have created, but idols can be anything which we worship other than YHWH. Fourth, they begin to pursue "sinful desires." They give themselves over to sexual acts which are improper according to God's ordering of the world.
- There is a downward spiral into sinful behavior. It begins with the first step, denying God as creator of the universe. When the first step is taken, the rest is sure to follow.

## **Verses 26-27**

***Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.***

***<sup>27</sup> In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.***

- Because of their choice to not worship God as Creator, God lets them experience the consequences of their choice. He lifts his hands and removes his protection from them. The first consequence of their choice is sexual perversion, homosexuality. Men and women become involved in unnatural sexual practices.
- The decision to become involved in these unnatural acts, brings its own penalty upon those who become engaged in them.

## **Verses 28-31**

***Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup> they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.***

- Sexual perversion is just the first step in what happens to people who fall into the downward spiral away from God. Sexual perversion is the first sign of a culture in free fall. Once begun, people become increasingly wicked, evil, greedy and depraved. This mindset is marked by envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. As the free fall grows more intense, people become, gossips, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful. They begin to invent new ways of doing evil. They deny their responsibility to their parents because they

understand nothing, are loyal to no one but themselves, do not love anyone other than themselves, and lack mercy.

- It is important to note that the first step in this downward spiral away from God is homosexuality and ultimately is expressed in disobedience to parents, and finds its fullest expression in self-love above everything else.

## **Verses 32**

***Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.***

- These people know the law of God as it is revealed in "God's righteous decree." They have the word of the Lord, the Bible. They know what the Bible says; that those who disobey the revealed word of the Lord will die eternally. However, they do not care! They continue to violate the commands of God themselves and teach others to do so, as well. In addition, they honor those who disobey the word of the Lord.
- These verses provided an amazing description of the culture in which we live!

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Not Ashamed*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)